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DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

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This Study of the DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, *prepared by the Secretary of the* FOUNDATION, *is published as the first of a series which the* CHRISTIAN UNITY FOUNDATION *hopes to be able to issue from time to time, on the different Religious Bodies in the United States. The Study has been read by some prominent Disciples who have stated that it is a correct presentation of their position.*

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THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

A Brief Statement of Their Doctrines and Status in the United States

The Disciples of Christ owe their origin to the preaching of Thomas Campbell and his son, Alexander. Thomas, was born in County Down, Ireland, February 1, 1763. His father had been in early life a Roman Catholic, but afterwards became an Anglican, but Thomas became a Member of the Covenanter and seceded branches of the Presbyterian Churches. His son, Alexander, was also born in Ireland, September 12, 1788. The opening days of the nineteenth century was a period of division and secessions among the Presbyterians. Thomas Campbell, from the first, saw that the great hindrance to the conversion of the world to Christ was in the divisions of Christendom. He endeavoured to further the cause of reunion at home by pleading for a union of the Burghers and Anti-Burghers in Ireland. In 1804 he prepared propositions for union and they were presented to the Synod at Belfast, but though there was apparently an unanimous desire for union, the measure failed. This failure produced on the mind of his son, Alexander, a deep and lasting impression. His physicians having recom-

mended Thomas Campbell to take a sea voyage he came to America in June, 1807, and being so much pleased with the New World he decided to remain there permanently and sent for his family. They sailed from Londonderry in 1808, but were wrecked off the Hebrides. This necessitated the postponement of the journey, and young Alexander staid about three months in Glasgow and here he came under the influence of the Haldane Brothers. Meanwhile his father had been cordially received in America by the Presbyterians and given a charge in the Presbytery of Chartiers in Western Pennsylvania.

Here in a preparation Sermon for the Holy Communion he invited all, without regard to their religious differences, to come to the Holy Communion. For this he was tried before the Presbytery and censured. He appealed to the Associate Synod of North America. When called upon, Thomas Campbell made an address which made such an impression on his hearers that the Synod set aside the Judgment of the Presbytery and released him from censure. The general feeling against Mr. Campbell was, however, so strong that he formally renounced his ministry, and associating several persons with him formed an organization called

"The Christian Association of Washington, Pa."

That all might understand the principles of his Association, a "Declaration and Address" was published. This address has been described as an "earnest appeal to evangelical believers to come together in aggressive Christian work, by a return in faith, in ordinance, and in life, to the religion of Christ as described on the pages of the New Testament." The tenth Proposition dwells on the evils of divisions among Christians. It declares that division is "anti-christian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if He were divided against Himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of Himself. It is anti-scriptural, as being strictly prohibited by His sovereign authority; a direct violation of His express command. It is anti-natural, as it excites Christians to contemn, to hate, and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion and of every evil work."

The Disciples therefore started out with the re-union of Christendom as their main purpose. This is a feature, peculiar I think, to this body of Christians. As far as

I know, no other denomination so explicitly took this ground. Thomas Campbell applied to the Synod of Pittsburgh for admission with his Association. This resulted in an unfortunate controversy, and as the result, the Association was forced, very reluctantly, to organize itself into an independent religious organization known as the "First Church of the Christian Association of Washington, meeting at Cross Roads and Brush Run, Washington County, Pa."

Alexander, the son, came over with the family in the fall of 1809. As a result of his studies, he came to the conclusion that immersion was the Scriptural mode of baptism, and consequently, in June, Thomas Campbell and his wife, Alexander Campbell and his wife, and other members of the family, were immersed by Luce, a Baptist Minister.

In 1813 the Brush Run Church formally became united with the Redstone Association of Baptist Churches. But the Baptists as a whole did not welcome the new members whose orthodoxy in the Baptist Faith they much questioned. In fact, an effort was made to bring Alexander Campbell to trial for heresy, on account of a "sermon on the Law" preached by him in

1816. The Campbells were never expelled from the Baptist Communion. They left the Redstone Association and joined the Mahoning Association. The followers of the Campbells became known as "Christians" or "Disciples of Christ." Their local organizations were termed "The Christian Church" or "Church of the Disciples" or "Disciples' Church," usually, however, the legal title was the "Church of Christ at such and such a place."

The Disciples of Christ have always been foremost in their advocacy of Christian union. As one of their writers has said, "There is not a word in the New Testament on the subject of Church Union, but there is much about Christian Union." In reply to the overtures of our Bishops in 1887 the Disciples made a formal reply that while they could not agree to everything in the Declaration, yet they did most heartily hope for a "brotherly conference," and then they went on to state what, in the light of the investigations and experiences of three quarters of a century, they deemed essential to Christian Unity.

"The Holy Scriptures are the only *catholic* rule of faith and discipline. On no other platform can the scattered hosts of spiritual Israel be restored to unity. The

'Historic Episcopate' or 'the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church *during the first ages of its existence,*' will not be accepted by the various 'divided branches of Christendom' as *essential* to Christian Unity, or as binding on the conscience. Nothing less authoritative than a *thus saith the Lord* will be universally recognized as *essential* to Christian unity or as binding on the conscience. The history of the early Christian centuries may have a universally admitted value as illustrating or confirming Scripture; but as *essential* to union in Christ no historical teaching outside of the inspired books will be universally, or even generally, accepted by the divided branches of Christendom. For instance: if parochial or diocesan episcopacy, or an order of priesthood in the church other than that 'royal priesthood' which belongs to all believers, is set forth in the New Testament Scriptures as of divine authority, then *collateral* evidence of such forms of episcopal government and such order of priesthood may be brought from the history of 'the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence;' and such testimony of a 'Historic Episcopate' would doubtless be allowed to have its just weight. But a basis of union

involving anything as essential other than what is contained in the revealed Word of God we regard as utterly impracticable.

"What we have said of the testimony of the early Christian centuries may also be said of what is styled the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and all other human creeds. Nothing less authoritative than God's Word should be regarded as beyond the reach of 'compromise or surrender.' 'Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me,' said the inspired Paul to Timothy. No form of uninspired words, however admirable in the estimation of multitudes, can be insisted on as beyond 'compromise or surrender,' without placing an insuperable obstacle in the way of 'the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom.' If any 'statement of the Christian faith' should at any time be deemed necessary, not as a bond of fellowship, but for public information or to condemn prevalent errors, we respectfully submit that Christians of to-day can put such statement in a form much better suited to the people of this generation than the Nicene formula, which had birth out of the controversies of that time, and came into being under conditions which not only do not now exist, but which are not so much as

known to the great majority of professed Christians of the present time. * * * *

"(1) That the original, inspired creed—that and that alone which was required to be believed and confessed by all who sought membership in the Church of God—had but one article, viz., 'JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.' That which justified and saved, and held all the saved in one blessed fellowship, was not assent to a system of doctrines, a formulation of speculative opinions and theories, or a form of church government, but faith in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God; faith in a divine person, love of a divine person, absolute and entire personal surrender and committal, in conscience, heart, and life, to a divine person—this was the requirement, the only requirement, laid on those who sought salvation and entrance into the fellowship of Christians. This is a *divine* creed, which can be neither compromised nor surrendered. Everything that is not legitimately involved in this one article of faith concerning the Christhood and divinity of Jesus, as a test of fitness, on the score of faith, for admission to membership in the church, not only may be, but ought to be, surrendered.

"(2) That all who confessed this faith in the Lord Jesus were admitted to Christian

fellowship in an immersion of water into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And only such were admitted. We would say, therefore, that those who thus accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, and were thus immersed, were, in the apostolic age, members of the Church of God; or to use the language of the Declaration, 'members of the Holy Catholic Church.' The church of apostolic times acknowledged 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism;' and these were among the *essentials* of Christian unity.

"(3) That those who were thus added to the church were continued in fellowship *so long as they walked in the commandments of Jesus.* Obedience to the Lord Jesus—in other words, *Christian character*—was the test of fellowship in the church. If any one denied the Lord that bought him, or refused to honour him by obedience to his commandments, he was to be condemned as unworthy of Christian fellowship. But so long as one cherished faith in the Son of God and kept his commandments, he was entitled to a place among the children of God. If he was *right concerning Christ,* though he might be wrong about many things, it was presumed that Christ would bring him right about everything essential to spiritual life and en-

joyment. And if he was not right as to his faith in and obedience to Christ, however free from error in other respects, his unbelief and disobedience formed an insurmountable barrier to the fellowship of Christians.

"It will be seen that this is *catholic* ground. 'The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God' is catholic. This cannot be said of any creed of human compilation.

"Faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is catholic. It is the faith of all who accept the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.

"The immersion of believers into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is catholic. No one disputes that the believer is a proper subject of baptism, while there is serious and widespread controversy over the admission of infants to that ordinance. All admit that the immersion of a proper subject is valid baptism, while there is endless controversy over sprinkling and pouring.

"Disciples of Christ, Church of God, Churches of Christ—these are catholic. All evangelical parties claim these designations, and complain of any exclusive appropriation of them; while Episcopalian, Presby-

terian, Baptist, Methodist, etc., are party names which can never be universally approved.

"Here, then, we stand on unsectarian ground, where, it seems, if anywhere, we find the *essential* principles of Christian unity, which cannot be compromised or surrendered."

Thomas Campbell died at Bethany, Va., December 7, 1854, and Alexander at the same place, March 4, 1866.

The Disciples of Christ have never, so far as I am aware, set forth any confession of Faith, or definite Statement of their belief. The nearest approach to it, that I have seen, is this one taken from one of their organs:

"The principles of the Christian Church are to-day what they were a century ago in the beginning of the movement, for though there have been changes in denominational attitude during the last century, the reunion to be desired is as yet unrealized. These principles may be cited as follows:

1. "The unity which existed in the New Testament church, and which Christ prayed might continue to exist.

2. "The rejection of all human creeds as authoritative and for the restoration of the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the only

authoritative rule of faith and of practice.

3. "The rejection of all party names in religion, and the use of those common names which suitably describe all the followers of Christ—as Christians, or disciples of Christ, or churches of Christ—thus giving pre-eminence to Christ in all things.

4. "The restoration of the New Testament creed or confession of faith, namely, the old confession of Simon Peter on which Jesus said he would build his church, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

5. "The restoration of the two ordinances of Christianity, baptism and the Lord's Supper, to their original place and meaning.

6. "The restoration of the New Testament method of evangelization through the simple preaching of the gospel of Christ, and the baptizing of penitent believers, who signify their willingness to confess the Lord Jesus and to walk in obedience to his commandments.

7. "The organization of baptized believers into local congregations or churches, which have the right of self-government in all subjects that pertain to their local welfare—with the two classes of local officers recognized in the New Testament as bishops or elders and deacons.

8. "For the manifestation of the spirit of unity by co-operation with other followers of Christ.....in so far as this may be done without sacrificing any truth or principle which its mission is to emphasize."

The Disciples celebrated the Centennial of their existence at Pittsburgh in 1909, when, it is said, over 50,000 of their members were present.

Their next Annual Conference is to be held at Portland, Oregon, in July next, when it is expected there will be an attendance of at least 5,000.

In conclusion let me say that I endeavoured to sum up their chief characteristics in the following five points. I submitted them to a leading Minister of their Organization for his criticism and in reply he wrote me, "The five points you have drawn up are well expressed."

I. Veneration of the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, but regarding the New Testament as the book of authority.

II. Insistance on the Divinity of our Blessed Lord and on the operation of the Holy Spirit.

III. Immersion in Baptism (to which our Prayer Book gives the preference).

IV. Celebration of the Holy Communion

every Sunday insisted upon (long before the revival in our own Church).

V. Foremost of all Christian Bodies in the advocacy of Union, and requiring no other requisites than those which can be proved out of the words of our Lord.

We come now to the question of the present status of the Disciples. To understand this, I present statistics compiled from the last United States Census. The following Tables give the Statistics for the whole of the Union, then the Statistics for the Disciples and Christians (which is an off-shoot of the main body) for each State in the Union, and lastly, Tables showing the comparative strength of the Disciples and our own Church in every State. At the end I have given some figures taken from the Tables prepared by Dr. Carroll in his "Statistics of the Churches of the United States, 1910."

STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES

	Organizations.	Communicants.	Ministers.	Church Buildings.
Disciples of Christ	8,293	982,701	6,641	7,066
Churches of Christ	2,649	159,658	2,100	1,974
	10,942	1,142,359	8,741	9,040
Protestant Episcopal Church	6,845	886,942	5,368	6,822

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

	No. of Organizations.	Communicants.	Buildings.	Value.	Debt.	Sunday School Pupils.
Maine	7	260	4	$ 11,100		303
New Hampshire	1	4				
Vermont	2	316	2	5,600		140
Massachusetts	9	1,527	9	89,340	12,230	1,149
Rhode Island	2	79	1	2,500		87
Connecticut	4	866	2	38,700		340
New York	53	9,124	52	775,250	98,480	6,748
New Jersey	2	213	2	44,000	16,955	335
Pennsylvania	162	26,458	145	1,412,200	167,247	19,809
Delaware	1	75	1	1,600		30
Maryland	26	3,343	26	231,700	45,300	2,949
District of Columbia	5	2,170	6	141,000	25,013	1,495
Virginia	277	26,128	257	517,525	28,467	16,341
West Virginia	134	10,729	109	364,541	39,900	7,332
North Carolina	123	13,342	121	146,455	3,210	4,348

	No. of Organizations.	Communicants.	Buildings.	Value.	Debt.	Sunday School Pupils.
South Carolina	41	2,021	37	36,375	5,450	736
Georgia	129	12,703	110	399,620	8,130	4,470
Florida	33	2,194	29	106,450	19,390	1,823
Ohio	543	83,833	530	3,078,060	182,825	57,230
Indiana	670	108,188	639	2,739,186	173,964	58,753
Illinois	769	101,516	470	2,273,090	129,001	64,802
Michigan	116	9,791	94	391,400	30,860	7,963
Wisconsin	24	1,707	18	38,500	600	1,596
Minnesota	43	3,560	37	192,850	15,595	2,471
Iowa	440	55,948	435	1,790,765	57,968	35,855
Missouri	1424	159,050	1,146	3,228,754	114,063	83,362
North Dakota	5	147	2	2,850	125	189
South Dakota	21	1,478	18	52,500	5,540	859
Nebraska	178	19,121	157	516,870	29,010	12,574
Kansas	343	40,356	309	927,250	44,305	27,887
Kentucky	841	123,659	784	2,434,155	93,456	51,760
Tennessee	150	14,904	138	404,950	22,750	8,719
Alabama	154	8,756	91	204,750	20,293	3,110
Mississippi	105	6,709	83	136,235	6,210	2,687
Louisiana	25	2,127	20	89,400	14,040	1,189
Arkansas	156	10,269	119	222,665	22,615	5,803
Oklahoma	315	24,232	260	588,535	62,620	18,828

Texas	503	39,550	360	1,399,743	91,120	25,294
Montana	22	2,008	18	92,600	7,585	1,291
Idaho	54	3,206	27	54,100	4,183	1,742
Wyoming	4	292	2	10,500	2,300	240
Colorado	47	8,521	43	376,900	18,450	5,654
New Mexico	11	963	5	42,900	2,500	624
Arizona	4	484	4	34,500	1,800	345
Utah	1	250	1	15,000	1,000	100
Nevada	1	100				40
Washington	83	10,140	71	383,600	26,656	6,720
Oregon	90	10,012	77	245,880	19,768	6,762
California	140	20,272	132	1,147,500	121,639	15,534

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF STRENGTH OF EPISCOPAL AND DISCIPLES ORGANIZATIONS BY STATES

(First row of figures, P. E. Church; second, Disciples).

	Organizations.	Communicants.	Buildings.	Value.	Debt.	Sunday School Pupils.
Maine	49	5,520	58	$ 638,000	$ 3,920	2,630
	7	260	4	11,100		303
New Hampshire	61	4,892	65	713,881	19,175	2,222
	1	4				
Vermont	65	5,278	69	504,298	7,921	2,073
	2	316	2	5,600		140

	Organizations.	Communicants.	Buildings.	Value.	Debt.	Sunday School Pupils.
Massachusetts	229	51,636	264	9,633,276	183,945	26,605
	9	1,527	9	80,340	12,230	1,149
Rhode Island	71	15,443	77	1,482,190	57,600	8,943
	2	79	1	2,500		87
Connecticut	189	37,466	209	4,951,725	58,793	17,558
	4	866	2	38,700		340
New York	843	193,890	994	39,234,723	1,631,927	97,557
	53	9,124	52	775,250	98,480	6,748
New Jersey	271	53,921	312	6,272,314	280,275	30,759
	2	213	2	44,000	16,955	335
Pennsylvania	489	99,021	571	13,323,429	1,485,656	65,243
	162	26,458	145	1,412,200	167,247	19,800
Delaware	39	3,796	45	430,475	92,500	2,482
	1	75	1	1,600		30
Maryland	262	34,965	317	3,429,341	501,425	17,800
	26	3,343	26	231,700	45,300	2,949
District of Columbia..	38	13,692	43	1,864,850	117,500	6,606
	5	2,170	6	141,000	25,013	1,495
Virginia	593	28,487	353	2,435,765	399,825	18,725
	277	26,128	257	517,525	28,467	16,341
West Virginia	91	5,230	87	555,516	28,050	3,357
	134	10,729	109	364,541	39,900	7,332

North Carolina	258	13,890	261	987,925	13,758	11,068
	123	13,342	121	146,455	3,210	4,348
South Carolina	118	8,557	107	832,700	16,250	4,321
	41	2,021	37	36,375	5,450	736
Georgia	121	9,790	128	1,101,989	53,510	4,786
	129	12,703	110	399,620	8,130	4,470
Florida	141	8,575	130	736,065	73,625	4,390
	33	2,194	29	106,450	19,390	1,823
Ohio	192	32,399	221	4,626,972	180,658	14,187
	543	83,833	530	3,078,060	182,825	57,230
Indiana	71	7,653	77	1,019,800	65,685	3,188
	670	108,188	639	2,739,186	173,964	58,753
Illinois	210	36,364	222	4,039,500	305,825	14,203
	769	101,516	470	2,273,090	129,001	64,802
Michigan	201	26,439	204	2,328,025	138,647	12,104
	116	9,791	94	391,400	30,860	7,963
Wisconsin	162	16,527	161	1,682,815	95,985	7,378
	24	1,707	18	38,500	600	1,596
Minnesota	223	18,763	197	1,523,875	67,725	9,936
	43	3,560	37	192,850	15,595	2,471
Iowa	91	8,990	92	1,084,705	41,000	3,589
	440	55,948	435	1,790,765	57,968	35,855
Missouri	125	13,328	120	1,553,030	108,547	6,420
	1,424	159,050	1,146	3,228,754	114,063	83,362

	Organizations.	Communicants.	Buildings.	Value.	Debt.	Sunday School Pupils.
North Dakota	88	2,227	42	138,400	8,100	1,015
	5	147	2	2,850	125	859
South Dakota	126	6,903	112	318,435	7,900	3,158
	21	1,478	18	52,500	5,540	859
Nebraska	126	6,903	94	712,370	30,134	3,627
	178	19,121	157	516,870	29,010	12,574
Kansas	90	6,459	80	416,200	5,050	2,701
	343	40,356	309	927,250	44,305	27,887
Kentucky	86	8,091	69	1,074,380	37,550	4,401
	841	123,659	784	2,434,155	93,456	51,760
Tennessee	103	7,874	95	986,100	63,250	4,100
	150	14,904	138	404,950	22,750	8,719
Alabama	102	8,961	82	1,006,600	3,275	3,550
	154	8,756	91	204,750	20,293	3,110
Mississippi	81	5,704	76	583,094	24,250	2,254
	105	6,709	83	136,235	6,210	2,687
Louisiana	80	9,070	75	816,975	86,700	3,927
	25	2,127	20	89,400	14,040	1,189
Arkansas	67	4,315	51	323,525	10,840	2,012
	156	10,269	119	222,665	22,615	5,803
Oklahoma	43	2,024	39	122,050	17,486	923
	315	24,232	260	588,535	62,620	18,828

Texas	175	14,246	155	1,208,910	18,418	6,668
	503	39,550	360	1,399,743	91,120	25,294
Montana	57	3,290	38	259,375	5,250	2,198
	22	2,008	18	92,600	7,585	1,291
Idaho	48	1,846	35	195,800	14,810	1,916
	54	3,206	27	54,100	4,183	1,742
Wyoming	40	1,741	28	191,900	2,650	1,693
	4	292	2	10,500	2,300	240
Colorado	104	6,832	74	771,035	36,552	4,119
	47	8,521	43	376,900	18,450	5,654
New Mexico	18	869	14	66,750	240	532
	11	963	5	42,900	2,500	624
Arizona	13	1,059	10	75,000	870	569
	4	484	4	34,500	1,800	345
Utah	15	977	16	287,000		761
	1	250	1	15,000	1,000	100
Nevada	21	1,210	15	135,400	9,500	805
	1	100				40
Washington	82	6,780	74	689,525	24,983	3,388
	83	10,140	71	383,600	26,656	6,720
Oregon	52	3,580	51	472,675	13,145	1,904
	90	10,012	77	245,880	19,768	6,762
California	223	21,317	213	2,201,815	186,289	10,000
	140	20,272	132	1,147,500	121,639	15,534

According to Dr. Carroll's figures, the Disciples now stand fourth in rank of all Christians in the United States; they are exceeded in number only by the Roman Catholics, the Methodists and the Baptists.

Their Communicant roll for 1910 was 1,363,116—ours was 928,780. In the Table, showing the net gains for the year 1910, the order stands thus:

Roman Catholics	110,100
Methodists	108,776
Disciples and Churches of Christ	89,759
Baptists	85,828
Presbyterians	72,659
Lutherans	70,439
Eastern Orthodox	50,000
Episcopalians	16,677

Compared with ourselves, the net gain for 1910 in Ministers, Churches, and Communicants, stands thus:

	Ministers.		Churches.	Communicants.
Disciples (decrease)	15		298	89,759
Episcopalians	14	(decrease)	22	16,677

With regard to the Roman Catholics and Methodists, it must be observed that both these bodies gain largely by immigration. It is doubtful if the Disciples gain anything appreciable from that source; they, therefore, appear to be the fastest growing body of Christians in the United States.

February 11, 1911. A. L.

THE SECOND CLAUSE OF THE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

Second. The purpose for which this Corporation is formed is: To promote Christian Unity at home and throughout the world. To this end, to gather and disseminate accurate information relative to the faith and works of all Christian bodies: To set forth the great danger of our unhappy divisions and the waste of spiritual energy due thereto: To devise and suggest practical methods of co-operation, substituting comity for rivalry in the propagation of the common faith: To bring together all who are labouring in the same field, and this in the belief that full knowledge of one another will emphasize our actual membership in the one body of Christ and our common agreement in the essentials of faith.

That, finally, by the operation of the Spirit of God, the various Christian bodies may be knit together in more evident unity in the essentials of faith and practice and in one organic life.

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

THE CHRISTIAN UNITY FOUNDATION, which was incorporated July 18th, 1910, is a purely voluntary and unofficial organization.

Its purpose is to promote Christian Unity at home and throughout the world, by the method of Research and Conference.

The Secretary, the Rev. Dr. Lowndes, may be addressed at his office, 143 East Thirty-seventh Street, New York. He will gladly furnish any further information.

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